WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY · Founded December 17, 1857 SEPTEMBER 1980

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

HISTORY PRO'S ELECTED TO WCHS OFFICES— DR. JOHN DANN, MARY BLASKE, BRAD TAYLOR

Dr. John C. Dann of Dexter, director of Clements Library of early American history at the U-M, was elected president of Washtenaw County Historical Society, at the annual meeting.

Mary Steffek Blaske, editorial and administrative assistant of the Historical Society of Michigan, is vice-president. She has a degree in museum practice and tunes calliopes at Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn as a sideline.

Brad Taylor, bibliographic data supervisor at Mathematical Reviews and former assistant curator of the lighting collection at Henry Ford Museum, is treasurer. He received a master's degree in museum practice from the U-M in August.

Other officers are Ethelyn S. Morton, corresponding secretary, and Alice E. Ziegler, recording secretary. Elected directors were Patricia K. Austin, Rosalie Collie, Frances Couch, Ellen St. Amour, David S. Pollock and Wystan A. Stevens. Pollock is to fill out an unexpired term to June 1981. Stevens, city historian, is director at large. The others terms expire June 1983.

Treasurer Austin reported the Society account had total assets of $12,381.15 as of April 30 and the Barton Powerhouse account had $7,448.99.

Hazel Proctor, museum committee chairman, said the fund drive was halted while the city investigates again making power at Barton Dam. That will benefit the society in the long run, she said. She showed slides of the powerhouse and distributed a map of altered boundaries of the leased site worked out by the city and Barton Village for a new access road along the railroad.

Stevens then showed slides of WCHS activities for the past several years.

ART FAIR ACTIVITIES YIELD $2,445 FOR WCHS

WCHS gained $2,445.23 thanks again to Great Lakes Federal Savings for use of their facilities for Art Fair activities—rental of booths under the portico, renting parking spaces evenings and Saturday and selling pop and snacks.

Special thanks to Hazel Proctor, vice-president of marketing at Great Lakes, Carol Hunt of her staff and Richard Robtoy, general services manager.

Thanks also to Society members and friends who helped staff booth and parking lot. Lois Foyle was booth chairman. Carol Freeman secured helpers for booth and parking.

Helpers included John Bean, Mrs. Howard Bjork, Flora Burt, Mary and George Campbell, Rosalie Collie, Frances Couch, Joyce Doetkott, Ruth Floyd, Cathy Freeman, Addie Groomes, Harold Jones, Harriet and Tom Lacy, Dan and Mary Lirones, Mrs. K.Y. Ma, Ethelyn Morton, Clifford Murphy, Autumn, Cameron and Sherry Powers, Dorothy Reiff, Jewel Reynolds, Janet Rocco, Wilma Steketee, Eleanor Wescott, Millicent Willits, Martha Wilson, Ann Wardrop, Lucille Zink and Alice Ziegler.

Parking helpers were David Braun, Dr. John Dann, Gordon Folland, Robert Lytle, Don and John Proctor, Peter Rocco, Wystan Stevens, Brad Taylor, Raymond Warzynski, Frank Wilhelme and Lawrence Ziegler.

TOM JONES HEADS HSM

Tom Jones of Ypsilanti, former publicity director of the Detroit Historical Museum, is the new director of the Historical Society of Michigan, replacing Frank Wilhelme who is now involved in alumni fund raising for the U-M School of Business Administration.

MICHIGAN FOLK MUSIC TO BE SEPTEMBER TOPIC

Bob Fleck, folk arts coordinator at the Michigan Council for the Arts in Detroit, will show his movie, "Save The Last Dance" at the WCHS meeting at 8 p.m. Thursday, September 25, at the Salvation Army.

One of Fleck's projects is to document folk music styles of the state of Michigan. His movie includes country fiddlers, dulcimer players and dancers. It ranges from music of Upper Peninsula Finnish miners to local Germanic fiddlers.

The October speaker will be Hazen Schumacher of radio station WUOM speaking on "Jazz in Michigan."

SURPRISE LUNCHEON HONORS BARTLETT, 90

Flashbulbs popped Friday, August 22, as WCHS Past-president Herbert Bartlett was honored at a surprise luncheon for his 90th birthday at Hathaway's Hideaway on Ashley Street, arranged by Hazel and Don Proctor.

Bartlett, who makes his home at the Saline Evangelical Home, was photographed by Cecil Lockard of *The Ann Arbor News* and Paul Tull, editor of the *Saline Reporter*. News Reporter Bonnie Newman interviewed him there. Just beforehand, he was on Ted Heusel's WPAG radio show. His birthday was the 24th.

A copy of Dr. Dann's book, *The Revolution Remembered*, was presented to him. Ethelyn Morton and George and Mary Campbell assisted.

1890's DRESS GIVEN WCHS

A black linen embroidered dress of the 1890's and a white embroidered pocketbook belonging to Mrs. Emma Radke (1870-1935) who came from Germany in the 1890's has been presented to WCHS by Fred Radke of Ypsilanti.

WCHS JACKSON TOUR:

Saw Almost Everything But Inside Of Prison

When the Washtenaw County Historical Society "did a little time in Jackson" Saturday, June 14, they saw almost everything except the inside of a prison.

On the way to and from Ella Sharp Museum, the main destination, Wystan Stevens conducted an extensive tour of the city. Tourgoers saw where Jackson was founded in 1829, where the Republican party was born "under the oaks" in 1854, the world's largest walled prison and an earlier prison, now a National Guard Armory.

The tour stopped at the ornate 1930 Michigan Theater, the restored 1876 Michigan Central Depot with its gleaming golden oak woodwork and quaint old White's Drug Store still furnished as it was when one could drop by for a refreshing drink of sarsaparilla.

Stevens guided the bus up and down several streets with many fine older homes—ranging from Greek Revival, Federal, Italianate and other nineteenth century styles to Tudor revivals of the 1920's. Some reminded viewers of Ann Arbor's fraternity houses and the Ives Woods section. There is even a French chateau reminiscent of Ann Arbor's Hoover mansion.

The bus first headed north of town on Cooper Street to Southern Michigan Prison, opened in 1934. With 5,300 inmates, its population is about 500 more than the City of Saline for example.

In the early 1950's prisoners rioted there, the first in a wave of large prison riots. A few years ago, there was a famous prison break using a helicopter. That was later made into a movie starring Charles Bronson, Stevens noted.

Inside the double prison fence is Pease Cemetery, "an old settler's burying ground whose tenants languish in posthumous captivity."

Returning to Jackson, the bus passed the city limits sign proclaiming, "We like it here," and approached the earlier European fortress style prison with its large stone walls started in 1842. It replaced the first prison of 1839 whose 30 foot stockade of tamarack poles proved not to be impermeable even to prisoners who wore balls and chains.

Courtesy of Ella Sharp Museum

TOY ROOM IN TOWER OF ELLA SHARP HOME

"Jackson's action," touted in television commercials, takes place nearby at the Jackson Harness Raceway in the Jackson County fairgrounds. Not far away is the city's oldest church building, St. John's Catholic Church, built in 1857, ten years before Ann Arbor's oldest—St. Andrew's Episcopal. Originally red brick, St. John's was veneered in stone in the 1930's.

At the northeast corner of West Trail and West Jackson streets, now a pick-up truck sales lot, is Jackson's founding site. A 1924 D.A.R. marker reads:

"Here Horace Blackman with Captain Alexander Laverty and the Indian Guide Pe-Wy-tum camped the night of July 3, 1829. At sunrise the following morning salutes were fired celebrating Independence Day and the founding of the City of Jackson."

Jackson county lands were originally included within Washtenaw boundaries and even after being set-off as a separate county, Jackson was tied to Washtenaw for legal and administrative affairs for a time.

Stevens pointed out fine homes on Michigan Avenue, Franklin, Wildwood, First, West and other streets and Jackson High School (1926) on Wildwood, "a handsome specimen of collegiate gothic." The bus passed under an elm-arcaded section of Higby unscathed by Dutch elm disease. West Street used to be the west boundary of the city, he noted.

The downtown shopping mall which allows some traffic through was one of the first in Michigan. He pointed out the public library in beaux arts style and a former bank building now used for county offices.

The tour stopped to see the seedy but fascinating White Building drug store (1893) near the depot. The original marble soda fountain with labeled containers for every flavor soda you might ever want including sarsaparilla is in place though unused. Spindle-work wood shelves and apothecary drawers line the walls.

On the shelves can be found Mail Pouch chewing tobacco, Dewitt's Pills, Hanford's Balsam of Myrrh, Swamproot, Blackberry

Balsam, Packer's Tar Soap, Volcanic Oil Liniment, Father John's Medicine. The storekeeper is the authorized dealer for Willard's Treatment for stomach distress.

You can buy the *Red Devil Dream Book and Numerology Guide*, 1980 edition, and Indian Herb Oil Jinx Removing Offering Spray *in aerosol* as well as bathing beauty cards (bikini-clad), but one suspects the main trade is at the liquor counter in back. A portrait of Mr. White, son of the builder, overlooks the store. Purchases are still wrapped and tied.

Next stop was the 1,631 seat super-Baroque style Michigan Theater (1930) which a citizen group in Jackson, the Michigan Theater Preservation Society, is in process of acquiring. Architect Maurice Finkel who did Ann Arbor's Michigan Theater a couple of years earlier designed it. Unlike Ann Arbor's which was modified in 1956, it has original paint colors, lights and such. (Finkel's widow, Anya, sells hats at Jacobson's in Ann Arbor.)

Theater manager Ron Huling said there were 48 live performances there last year. Still on the marquee and display panels were announcements of a recent Christian music concert and the Rose City Physique Contest.

The theater was one of the first to be air conditioned (using a deep well) and because of its sound system, considered so modern it did not need an organ. Betty Ford and Jane Powell were on hand for its 50th anniversary.

At Ella Sharp Museum, guides showed the group through the beautifully restored 1857 Greek Revival farmhouse with Italianate tower addition. Entry is through the office at back, originally a shed.

The kitchen is most recently restored with its black and nickel trimmed Jewel cookstove, ice box, pitcher pump, and reflector lamps. The breakfast table is set with tea leaf design china.

The dining room is set with Haviland china bearing the name "D. Merriman" for Ella Sharp's father. A mica or isinglass wreath hangs on the wall. There are a number of Merriman-Sharp furnishings in the house, some from the Merriman's travels in Europe. The house is restored to about the 1880's.

Ella's mother, Mary Wing Farnsworth, had lost her husband and two children when she came to Michigan to visit her cousin, Nelson Wing of Dexter. Her father, Abraham Wing of Glen's Falls, New York, bought the farm for her in 1855. Within a year she married Dwight Merriman. Ella, their only surviving child, married John Sharp, an attorney and state senator, in 1881 and lived there until her husband's death in 1908. Four years later, with no children or other heirs, she left the house and land to the city for a park and museum.

The park opened soon after, the museum not until 1965.

John Sharp's law books and desk are in the library. A wall certificate shows Sharp was appointed superintendent of the 1880 census. During the Civil War men drafted could pay someone else to go. Merriman, apparently not drafted, paid anyway and received a certificate for his patriotic gesture.

The parlor has a transitional half-gas, half-electric light fixture, the Sharp's Victorian loveseat and chairs in the Eastlake style, Mrs. Merriman's square grand piano and a melodeon. The Merriman's bought the carved pedestal table with inlaid top in Germany and the marble table with inlay from Italy.

The card-table size table used to write the first Republican platform "under the oaks" is in the sitting room across the hall. Instead of the television set of today's family rooms, there is a stereoscope for viewing.

Upstairs are four main bedrooms including a children's room with child-size Windsor rocker and a low wash stand with divided china basin. The chamber pot has a crocheted cover or husher.

There is also a sewing room with Mrs. Merriman's 1858 treadle sewing machine she bought for $115, and a textile room where spinning, weaving and quilting are demonstrated and displayed. That was formerly two rooms—one for a hired girl, the other for trunks.

The museum also includes an appropriately furnished pioneer log cabin and one-room schoolhouse, a woodworking shop, an old Case steam engine and an art gallery and gift shop, then featuring local artists work.

After a swing through the park, formerly the Merriman's and Sharp's Hillside Farm of 600 acres, the bus headed back through town to see more houses, note the statuary in Mt. Evergreen Cemetery and stop at the Republican party birthplace and the depot.

President William Howard Taft first dedicated the GOP site at the northwest corner of Franklin and Second Streets in 1910. A placque on a boulder reads:

"Here under the oaks July 6, 1854, was born the Republican party destined in the throes of civil strife to abolish slavery, vindicate democracy and perpetuate the union."

The Jackson depot was restored in 1978 and is used for its original purpose. A courteous, red-coated employee showed the group the old "training" room with some old baggage carts like Chuck Muer uses for a salad table at the Gandy Dancer Restaurant in Ann Arbor's depot. He also invited the group to visit the doubledecker Amtrak Superliner down the siding.

Forty-five tourgoers then headed east on Michigan Avenue to Grass Lake Methodist Church, "one of the oldest in the county if not the oldest" according to Erma Campbell, church historian.

There a beef dinner was served, topped off with a mouthwatering array of pies from which to choose, while Mrs. Campbell told how a cyclone on April 6, 1913, lifted off the roof of the 1861 building and dropped it across the street while leaving the two steeples standing.

TWO LOYAL MEMBERS PASS— DR. ROSS, PAUL KEMPF

WCHS lost two longtime stalwart members with the passing of Paul Kempf and Dr. C. Howard Ross.

Dr. Ross, president 1957, 1971, and 1972 died Saturday, August 30, at age 90. An entertaining speaker with a great fund of information, he addressed the society on several occasions.

Kempf, an active member and director, had worked for years toward the realization of a county historical museum. His boyhood home, Kempf House, is now a city museum. He died in May.

FALL FESTIVAL 28TH

Cobblestone Farm, 2781 Packard Road, will hold its fall festival 12-5 p.m. Sunday, September 28, with tours of the house and demonstration of old-time homemaking crafts on the lawn. On hand will be Edna Wells showing antique quilts and the Rug Hookers Guild. For more information call Co-president Fran Lyman, 761-4113.

THANKS GLFS

A big vote of thanks to Great Lakes Federal Savings for donating printing and paper for *Washtenaw Impressions* for the past six years. Thanks also to Drury, Lacy, Advertising for much free assistance during that period. The paper will now be commercially printed.

THANKS FOR GOODIES

Special thanks to Esther Warzynski and her husband, Raymond, who provided delicious refreshments for Society meetings last year.

HISTORICAL HAPPENINGS

Chelsea Historical Society — 7:30 p.m. second Monday, McKune Library, 221 S. Main St. October speaker: Ike Lumberg, former Chelsean who helped set up Fort Michilimackinac Park at Mackinaw City and is now involved in historic preservation in Indiana.

Dexter Historical Society — A speaker and slide presentation on the Dexter Museum is available to local organizations by calling the museum 1-3 p.m. on Tuesdays or director, Sarah Frank, at 426-4898 evenings. Museum, 3443 Inverness, also open 1-3 p.m. second and fourth Saturdays.

Through September, special display of cast iron banks and furniture miniatures by Sue Sherill, a local teacher.

Suzanne Mahler is recording secretary, replacing Heloise Dunstan. Other officers are continuing in office, President Wallace Fusilier said.

Manchester Historical Society — Annual meeting, 8 p.m. Monday, September 22, Methodist Church. The society raised $700 for its building fund from a collectible sale August 9 at the Manchester Art Fair. They also co-sponsored an historic walking tour that day with the Association for Talented and Gifted Children.

Milan Historical Society — A long awaited great day came this summer when the historic Hack House built more than 100 years ago by Bethuel Hack, one of three founders of Milan, was turned over to the Society for a museum and meeting place. Meetings, 7:30 p.m. third Wednesday of month. The society plans an open house later.

Saline Historical Society — Anyone interested in visiting the Northville Historical Village Sunday, September 21, is invited to meet at Saline High School parking lot at 2 p.m. to carpool.

The society will try meeting the third Sunday afternoon each month to encourage seniors to attend. Anyone needing a ride can call Douglas Jones, 429-2476, or Paul Myer, 429-2749.

Ypsilanti Historical Society — Tom Jones of Ypsilanti, new executive director of Historical Society of Michigan, will be featured speaker at third annual dinner Sunday, October 26, at Masonic Temple, 76 N. Huron Street. Tickets limited to 200, none at door, may be ordered from the museum at $5 each, $2.50 for children.

Museum, 220 N. Huron, now featuring old bell collection of Mrs. Tiszwell. Hours 2-4 p.m. Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

TO MEET AT MAP ROOM

The September Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting will be at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, September 28, in the map room of the Hatcher Graduate Library. James O. Minton, map reference librarian, will speak.

Editor: Alice Ziegler, 663-8826
Keylining: Anna Thorsch

WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

8:00 p.m. THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 25, 1980

SALVATION ARMY

West Huron at Arbana Ann Arbor, Michigan

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